

THE CONQUEST OF TROUBLE

CHARLES H. BRENT, D.D.

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The Conquest of Trouble
and
The Peace of God

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Musings

BY

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Etc.

*Before I was troubled I went wrong: but now have I kept thy
word. Ps. cxix, 67*

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To
Elisabeth Mills Reid
A sympathetic friend of the troubled
My friend

Preface

These pages are illustrative of a use of Holy Scripture which is fruitful of much help. A single topic, as considered by a group of writers, or in the New Testament, is tracked and made to yield up to the devout mind something of its spiritual content. In the Prayer Book version of the Psalter (which follows the Vulgate where it varies from the Hebrew) I have taken the word "trouble," wherever it occurs, and sought to discover how God has taught men to deal with it. The Latin word is usually "tribulatio" and the Greek "*θλίψις*." In the King James version and the Revised Version of the Bible, chapters and verses are sometimes dif-

Preface

ferently numbered from the version of the Psalter from which my quotations are taken. Nor is the word rendered "trouble" here always so translated there. But the substance is the same and a comparison between the different versions is serviceable.

Any close consideration of trouble may easily run into self-pitying morbidness. Most of us begin at any rate to meet our experiences of trouble with grieved surprise or resentment. We assume that, whatever the lot of others, we have a registered title to happiness. Such an assumption is due to a false conception of life. We count ourselves the favorites of God who is going to be indulgent to us and, if need be for our comfort, to ignore the very laws of His own

Preface

being to guard us from suffering. Or again, there are people who luxuriate, not in trouble, it is true, but in thinking that they are in trouble, people whose troubles ought to be ignored. The thoughts of these pages will bring scant comfort to the dilettanti. They are written for those who have a virile conception of life and who aim to make it more virile.

I am not attempting an exposition, nor is this modest book to be considered a commentary, of Holy Scripture. Rather is it the exhibition of a method of using the Bible, with the prayerful hope that my readers will make the method their own in connection with other subjects. The musings and reflections frequently have only indirect con-

Preface

nection with the verse which gave them birth.

The second half of the book is "peace" as dealt with in the New Testament. The Revised Version with fuller references by Moulton has been used for the purpose. Upon the outburst of the war, now torturing the world, I looked for consolation and found it in the consideration of God's peace. By embracing the ideal one gains for himself by anticipation that which will be outwardly manifested some day. I had originally no thought of passing on to others, what was written down for my own encouragement and invigoration, but it chances to be a further illustration of the method used in the "trouble" Psalms and may be more or less profitable to my friends. The

Preface

thoughts of other men are of great service, perhaps I ought simply to say of service, to those to whom they are given only so far as they become sifted, personalized and digested by each recipient. The thoughts most effective as a creative force are those which come as a special message to the individual in times of quiet talking with God. The real object in the publication of this book is to stimulate the prayerful use of Holy Scripture.

These are days in which men need, and will need, all the strength and fortitude that human life has capacity for. It is not to be imparted by galvanic shock or external agents. It cannot come by chance. But God is constantly pouring it through certain channels to which we must apply our-

Preface

selves with ardor. There are men who confine themselves to reading the thoughts of others and believe that this is a satisfactory substitute for wrestling with Holy Scripture in search of a blessing. The Sacraments are sure channels of strength and wisdom but they are largely formal and inoperative—this particularly applies to the clergy and intelligent laymen—if the nourishment of a regular and devout use of Holy Scripture does not accompany their use. The Bible is a major Sacrament, not a minor charm.

C. H. B.

Jolo, P. I.

12 October, 1915.

The Conquest of Trouble

The Conquest of Trouble

It is astonishing what a constant topic "trouble" is in the Psalter. In these pages only those verses are quoted in which the actual word occurs in the version most familiar to Churchmen. This, however, by no means exhausts all references to the subject. Specific troubles are mentioned by name and considered in Psalm after Psalm.

Before proceeding with our study let two things be noted: 1. The people who wrote these words spoke from the spacious depth of personal experience. 2. There is not a single note of sentimentality in the entire book of Psalms, nor is there a "trouble" Psalm which

The Conquest of Trouble

is devoid of courage. Most of them are written in terms of victory or hope of victory.

The first mention of trouble comes from the lips of one who is persecuted in a rising degree:

Ps. lxxviii, 1

“Lord, how are they increased that trouble me—”

1. “They rise against me”—there is active hostility (v. 2) among an increasing number.

2. They look upon me as defenceless—alone among men and “there is no help for him in his God” (v. 2).

The troubles are more than counterbalanced by God, the un-failing champion of the troubled. The very mention of hostility excites and enlivens faith, tending to

The Conquest of Trouble

unveil and exalt God's attributes:

“Thou O Lord art:

1. My defender (shield);

2. My worship (glory);

3. The lifter up of my head”

(v. 3).

God is actively protecting me: He is the sun and centre of my life: He delivers me from depression and shame, so that I walk erect among men. God answers my cry from the valley of trouble and heeds me from the hill-top of His holiness (v. 4). Trusting to his care I sleep refreshingly in the arms of His love (v. 5). I awake to find myself beset by foes innumerable—but the recreation of rest in God's arms leaves me unafraid (v. 6). He who held me safe in the hours of my unconsciousness will be up and doing to the confusion

The Conquest of Trouble

and shame of the ungodly: He will break their power (v. 7). In the Lord is a state of perpetual safety—it is His special benediction for His people (v. 8).

Ps. iv, 1

“Thou hast set me at liberty when I was in trouble.”

This trouble was as it were an imprisonment.

There was not freedom to use oneself.

Our powers are always fettered if they are so engrossed by some untoward condition as to leave us passive, or vainly struggling in its control. God is the source of righteousness. It is He who is our defender and worship; so is He our liberty.

God gives us liberty in trouble

The Conquest of Trouble

by enabling us to use it to our advantage and to move freely in its darkness and perils. He emancipates us from our fears. The sting of trouble is fear.

Ps. vi, 3

“My soul also is sore troubled.” This whole Psalm is by one deeply troubled in body and soul (v. 7). “My beauty is gone for very trouble.”

God is called upon to spare and in the end faith anticipates His sure response. Relief comes with the conviction that God heeds. We can hail the dawn even before day breaks if we have the foresight of faith. Comeliness is corroded by unbeaten trouble; it is transfigured by conquered trouble. There is in this Psalm something of self-pity,

The Conquest of Trouble

that enemy of God's pity. Without God's pity, the certainty that He is effectively operating upon our trouble, the mind must turn in upon itself and self-pity ensues.

It is very easy to aggravate trouble by dwelling too intently upon it and watching its clouds as they drift in, very much as the fascinated bird watches the serpent about to devour it. Nothing intensifies trouble like timidity and passivity. There is an oriental proverb which says that "you cannot prevent the birds of despair from flying over your head, but you need not ask them to nest in your hair."

Ps. lx, 9

"The Lord also will be a defence for the oppressed: even a refuge in due time of trouble."

The Conquest of Trouble

God's nature is to stand on the side of those who are dealt unjustly with. He becomes their daysman. It is the likeness of God in us that moves us to champion the weak cause and to help the under dog. Injustice kindles the active justice of God. He is also a resort, a harbor of refuge to which we can always flee when trouble comes. Consider the availability of God—like a mother's arms and bosom. They always await the home-coming of her children. Our Lord's wide-stretched arms are a harbor. Being lifted up He calls all men unto Him. It is not the Lord's forces, or His resources, or His gifts that are for the troubled. It is Himself—a fellowship, a communion. "Due time"—a neat phrase! God is due when trouble is due.

The Conquest of Trouble

Ps. ix, 13

“Consider the trouble which I suffer of them that hate me.”

An appeal to God for mercy by one plunged into trouble by the hate of his fellows, one of the most grievous forms of trouble. God recognizes trouble as a ground of appeal for compassion. “Come unto me all ye that travail and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.”

Ps. i, 1

“Why standeth thou so far off, O Lord: and hidest thy face in the needful time of trouble?”

This is a challenge to God to exhibit His compassion and power. The ungodly are laying their plots and compassing their plans. There

The Conquest of Trouble

is delay in God's interference. He is standing aside and averting His face. The conscious realization of God's protection is wanting. His essential character is not challenged. The Psalmist interrogates His mode. His temporary inaction is disquieting. It is characteristic of a creature of time to be impatient, but a consideration of God's attributes (vv. 18, 19, 20) quiets his importunity.

Ps. xli. 5, 6

“Now, for the comfortless troubles' sake of the needy: and because of the deep sighing of the poor, I will up, saith the Lord: and will help every one from him that swelleth against him, and will set him at rest.”

“Comfortless trouble”—there is

The Conquest of Trouble

such trouble as is too deep for human sympathy to touch or aid. It is not beyond God's reach. It is this that stirs God to help man. "The deep sighing of the poor"—sometimes so deep that no ear less sensitive and loving than God's can hear it. God hears and arises in His might. "I will set him in safety at whom they puff" (R. V.). The security of the innocent who are assailed by enemies—"I will set him in safety."

Ps. xliii, 4

"If I be cast down, they that trouble me will rejoice at it."

This is a marvelous Psalm beginning with a moan and ending with a song. The adversary desires not only to break our fortunes but also our spirit. If he accom-

The Conquest of Trouble

plishes the former only, he knows within his soul that he is vanquished. Browning's *Instans Tyrannus* is a commentary on this Psalm.

“Do you see? Just my vengeance
complete,
The man sprang to his feet,
Stood erect, caught at God's skirts,
and prayed!
— So, *I* was afraid.”

As long as I, in my deep, essential self am not “moved” (R. V.), I am master of the situation. If my enemy sees me depressed and sorrowful he will rejoice. We may not give grounds of gladness to the adversary. That is to furnish the foe with ammunition for use against us. Not is it the appear-

The Conquest of Trouble

ance of courage and calmness that we want: it is its reality. Trust in God's mercy makes the heart joyful in His salvation. The face of the enemy fades and retreats as one is lost in the enveloping atmosphere of God's protecting love.

Ps. lvi, 4

“They that run after another god: shall have great trouble.”

The way of peace and joy is with the one, true God: the seekers after other gods will meet great trouble as their portion. Every movement away from God is a storm-breeder for the soul. God alone shows the path of life which leads to His presence where is the fulness of joy and pleasure for evermore.

The Conquest of Trouble

Ps. xvii, 8, 9

“Hide me under the shadow of thy wings from the ungodly that trouble me.”

God puts His own protecting self between us and the ungodly that trouble us. It is He in us and around us that bears the chief shock of battle. Not only is it a destructive power to the ungodly but a tender, consoling power to us—as it were the soft, tremulous wings of a mother bird.

Ps. xviii, 5

“In my trouble I will call upon the Lord—”

Trouble does drive us to God when nothing else will. (Cf. S. Luke xv, 15 ff.) But how wonderful it is when we are living with God in glad days to press closer to

The Conquest of Trouble

Him under the stimulus of trouble. We already know exactly where He is and what He is. We go to Him as we have always been going to Him, only now with a fresh problem—the problem of trouble instead of the problem of joy. There is no panic in our approach, no uncertainty, no groping. This Psalmist has God always as his strength (v. 1) and his might is ever enveloping him. If he calls upon God in trouble it is but pursuing an established custom in new conditions.

Ps. xviii, 18

“They prevented me in the day of my trouble: but the Lord was my upholder.”

Man's evil activity is met by God's good activity. See the

The Conquest of Trouble

Koran *in loc.* to the effect that man plots against us but God plots too. While man is opposing, God is counter-opposing and bringing us to the liberty of His sons.

Ps. 121, 1

“The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble.” This is the pious wish or prayer for the man of God, the annointed of the Lord, whose heart is right. The whole Psalm is a superb challenge to trouble.

Ps. 124, 11

“O go not from me; for trouble is hard at hand: and there is none to help me.”

The appeal is not to a far off God but to one who is already hard at hand. When trouble is hard at hand, God is more so. He presses

The Conquest of Trouble

into our lives in direct proportion to our needs. God is the sole but adequate helper. It was so of old — “Our fathers hoped in thee; they trusted in thee, and thou didst deliver them” (v. 4). This was signally and uniquely and completely true in the case of our Saviour.

Ps. lxxiii, 5

“Thou shalt prepare a table before me against them that trouble me.”

God will feed us so that we may be strong. He does not treat us as beings incapable of self-defence. He does not defend us so much from without as from within. He feeds us with the Bread of Heaven that giveth life unto the world. Building us up with and in Him-

The Conquest of Trouble

self, He lets trouble confront us that we may confound it. The feast prepared is not a compensation for trouble but a weapon against it.

Ps. lxxv, 21

“Deliver Israel, O God: out of all his troubles.”

Israel, poor, imperfect, back-sliding, repentant Israel!—that is, myself. Full of good desires, ardent hopes, spasmodic struggles; constantly in troubles bred of my own faults. As often as we turn, we the covenant people, we shall find God is indeed Deliverer, Saviour. Troubles drive us to God: God drives troubles from us when he does not beckon us through them, which is His customary way.

The Conquest of Trouble

Ps. xxvii, 5

“For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his tabernacle; yea, in the secret place of his dwelling shall he hide me, and set me up upon a rock of stone.”

He who in the ordinary course of everyday life makes nearness to God, companionship with Him, his chief goal, when trouble comes will be given entrance into the sojourning place of God on earth and will find secret doors into God's mysteries. New intimacy with God will spring up and a strong, permanent foundation will be builded for our feet.

Ps. xxi 7

“Thou didst turn thy face from me: and I was troubled.”

Our sense of security, when all

The Conquest of Trouble

goes well, tends to make us lean on our prosperity as being our support and strength. God seems to have made our position impregnable. But God disappears from our prosperity, the prosperity itself perhaps remaining, and immediately we are troubled and turn to God right humbly as to Him without whom wealth is as ashes and life is not life at all. The support of God of which we are not conscious from moment to moment, the answer to prayer, which we do not recognize as answer, are God's most delicate attentions to human life.

Ps. lxxi, 8

“I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy: for thou hast considered

The Conquest of Trouble

my trouble, and hast known my soul in adversities.”

God is familiar with human trouble. He knows our case by having had experimental knowledge, victorious knowledge, in and through the Incarnation. He has not given my trouble a cursory glance: He has considered it, weighed it, studied my soul in relationship to its adversities. He knows perfectly what to do and when. His handling of my case is personal and merciful. There is no blundering or experimenting. Therefore I have reason to be glad and rejoice.

Ps. xxxi, 10

“Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am in trouble: and mine eye

The Conquest of Trouble

is consumed for very heaviness: yea, my soul and my body.”

There is sudden transition of thought—sense of security in God’s mercy changes to an appeal for His mercy. Trouble thickens and mercy must be enlarged. Life is a seesaw from weakness to strength and from strength to weakness. There is always a depth of woe hitherto unknown, always a height of mercy hitherto unexplored.

Ps. xxxii, 8

“Thou art a place to hide me in; thou shalt preserve me from trouble: thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance.”

There are two distinct thoughts relative to God’s providence—He preserves *from* and He preserves

The Conquest of Trouble

in trouble. This is the former. He is a covert from the tempest so that its blast will not touch us. "In the great water floods they shall not come nigh him."

Sometimes we know that we are in the midst of storm, that we are in the heart of a burning, fiery furnace, but we are unharmed. At other times we are protected and preserved from hidden and secret dangers of which we know nothing at the moment. Again there are times when the storm strikes us full and fair, marking us out to receive its utmost fury. Yet we are not swept away. God preserves us *in* and carries us *through* trouble. But it is when God is easily found, when there is nothing to distract us from concentrated effort to reach Him, that we are to

The Conquest of Trouble

learn how to find safe and peaceful and strong places in Him into which we can retreat in the day of trouble.

Ps. xxxiv, 17

“The righteous cry and the Lord heareth them: and delivereth them out of all their troubles.”

The effective direction of human complaint is Godward. There is no weakness or cowardice in our exhibiting our wounds to God, though these may be in seeking for human pity. “The *righteous* cry (or cried).” God hears and heeds. He delivereth them out of all their troubles. Here it is not a quick separation from but a certain supporting through. No snatching away by a parent who hates to see a child hard beset but a steady

The Conquest of Trouble

guidance and strengthening through *all* the troubles.

Ps. xxxiv, 19

“Great are the troubles of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of all.”

A reinforcement of the former statement personalized. The general is attached to the individual case. The troubles of the righteous are the most suffering troubles, because of sensitiveness extraordinary which develops with growth Godward, because they are volitional troubles which could be avoided, and because the greater the movement for righteousness the greater the counter movement of the enemy.

The Conquest of Trouble

Ps. xxxvii, 40

“The salvation of the righteous cometh of the Lord: who is also their strength in the time of trouble.” God works in and through the righteous in the time of trouble.

God works in and through the righteous in the time of trouble. The troubled servant gives God opportunity to declare His strength in weakness.

Ps. xxxviii, 6

“I am brought into so great trouble and misery: that I go mourning all the day long.”

The natural result of trouble is depression and heaviness. Sorrow hangs its heavy veil over the soul. There is no rift in the clouds. The

The Conquest of Trouble

whole long day is clouded as by a night of gloom.

Ps. xxxviii, 11

“My lovers and my neighbors did stand looking upon my trouble: and my kinsmen stood afar off.”

There is an absence of understanding and sympathy on the part of those to whom we would look for support. Those whom we love and among whom we live are averse to identifying themselves with us in our trouble. They are afraid of getting involved in it. What trouble is comparable to the alienation or indifference of lovers, kinsmen and friends? Few have to experience such a horror of desolation. It is bad enough to have enemies from the ranks of those we dislike or do not know.

The Conquest of Trouble

When it comes to the warmth of sympathy and affection fading into coldness and hatred, the climax of trouble is reached. When a man is in trouble the epigram, "He that is not with me is against me," holds good.

Ps. xl, 15

"For innumerable troubles are come about me; my sins have taken such hold upon me, that I am not able to look up; yea, they are more in number than the hairs of my head, and my heart hath failed me."

The troubles that come through our personal sins exceed in depth and diversity all other troubles—they are "innumerable." The memory of sin so fills our consciousness that when memory is

The Conquest of Trouble

acutely active thus, all else is excluded from consideration. The true direction of human gaze is upward. Eyes to heaven, feet on earth. But sin puts its grappling hooks upon us and pulls us down into stooping, heavily-moving creatures with our eyes upon our feet. "We are unable to look up." The paralyzing consciousness of sinfulness is not a mere general discomfort but a clear realization and a forced contemplation of the legions of definite sins which are "more in number than the hairs of my head." Courage flees from us — "my heart hath failed me." There is a heart-failure of the soul which can easily run into the dilapidation of accidie (See Chaucer's *The Parson's Tale*).

There is in this Psalm that pal-

The Conquest of Trouble

pitating movement of the soul that beats between despair and hope, trepidation and courage, which is a feature of the sensitive spiritual life but which ends as it begins with firm faith in God's salvation. (cf. vv. 1-3 & 19-21). God's great purpose for man is all conquering. The very depth of our necessity quickens His compassion and sets His power in motion. Though our prayers can never bend His will to our will, they can always bend His compassionate gaze toward our self-inflicted wounds and speed His healing hand toward our soul-sickness—"As for me I am poor and needy: but the Lord careth for me. Thou art my helper and redeemer: make no long tarrying, O my God."

The Conquest of Trouble

Ps. xli, 1

“Blessed is he that considereth the poor and needy: the Lord shall deliver him in the time of trouble.”

One may not consider the poor and needy out of self-interest as a sort of happiness—insurance, but as a matter of fact those who out of love and mercy do deeds of mercy are “blessed” and the Lord will look on their poverty and need with compassion and salvation. One thus disposed goes through the experience of sickness (v. 3), of conviction of sin (v. 4), and of hostile attack (v. 5), of treachery (v. 9). But the Lord delivers him in the time of trouble and he blesses God (vv. 10-13).

The Conquest of Trouble

Ps. xlv, 24

“Wherefore hidest thou thy face; and forgettest our misery and trouble.”

The Psalmist is looking to the record of God's faithfulness in history for grounds to believe that in the present confusion and national distress God will arise, help and deliver His people for His mercy's sake. He calls upon God to awaken and manifest Himself in the existing misery and trouble. He does not understand why God should delay action. But he knows that it is merely delay for a reason and not indifference or a lapse into inaction.

This is a thought for these inter-necine days.

The Conquest of Trouble

Ps. xlii, 1

“God is our hope and strength: a very present help in trouble.”

Permanence matched against impermanence to the confusion and discomfiture of the latter. First God's unalterable character in His relation to men is opened up —“our hope and strength.” Always, everywhere He is this. Unless this is our conviction it is difficult to find Him a “very present help in trouble.” If perchance through His mercy we find Him first as the God of the troubled, it is incumbent upon us to keep Him as the God of the relieved. Consider the immediacy of God's help —“very present.” Our troubled condition becomes His swift concern. Like the darting of the mother bird to her nest at the cry

The Conquest of Trouble

of her young so the ever present God becomes "very present" when we raise the signal of distress. God intensifies His presence at will. He is never absent. "The Lord of hosts is with us" (vv. 7, 11)—that is the key thought. He actively aids but He is our refuge to whom we flee for succor.

Ps. I, 15

"And call upon me in the time of trouble: so will I hear thee, and thou shalt praise me."

"*And*"—It is he whose habit is to offer God thanksgiving and to pay his vows unto the Most Highest (the magnificence of the double superlative!) who is to call upon Him in the time of trouble. God is not a mere trouble-insurance who pays out His help in times

The Conquest of Trouble

of stress as an accident insurance company awards its payments to its beneficiaries. The call of the troubled servant (not of an alien) rivets God's attention and the cry of distress melts into a hymn of praise. It is not an unpracticed voice that speaks to God. The times change from prosperity to trouble and the tone of voice changes from major to minor with the times. Then when the sunshine again returns the new hymn of joy and gladness has a fresh and beautiful ring to it. What gladness so great as that of the troubled saint safely piloted through suffering!

Ps. II, 17

“The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, shalt thou not despise.”

The Conquest of Trouble

This is the "Psalm of the Troubled Spirit." If we would discover the meaning of a troubled spirit we must try to empty this Psalm of its spiritual contents by putting our lives at its disposal like Savanarola and the whole great host of penitents.

Hitherto we have considered trouble as something to escape from by fleeing to God as a refuge or to conquer by leaning on the right hand of the Most Highest. Now we find it used in another sense. It is something to be self-induced, and cultivated, and presented to God as a sacrifice—"a troubled spirit." Self-satisfaction is dead, pride is broken as a faggot is snapped across the knee, the heart is punctured with the needle of contrition. The troubled

The Conquest of Trouble

spirit God does not despise. The trouble is heart-hunger for Him and He more than satisfies it.

Ps. ltv, 7

“For he hath delivered me out of all my trouble: and mine eye hath seen his desire upon mine enemies.”

One wonders whether the making of this Psalm did not cover a long stretch of time, first a period of prayer and spiritual combat and afterwards the response of victory. To him who offers the whole sacrifice of himself to God there is immediate comfort and relief (v. 6). Praising God in the furnace of trouble changes the complexion and operation of the fire. Instead of an angry menace it becomes a beacon light: instead of lashing

The Conquest of Trouble

with angry tongues, it purifies and refines. By anticipation trouble is removed, it ceases to exist, when we offer ourselves to God and forget ourselves in our praise of Him. Going through trouble with God is the one process of being "delivered out of all my trouble." The prayer for relief from trouble may be merely a coward's cry. It is for mastery not for relief that we seek, until "mine eye hath seen his desire upon mine enemies." Trouble driven away, not actually defeated, lurks about, gathering strength and watching opportunity for a fresh onset. The unclean spirit (S. Luke xi) merely "went out" of the man. He was not mastered and in consequence "the last state of that man was worse than the first." The con-

The Conquest of Trouble

quest, not the mere repulsion, of trouble, alone is adequate and final.

Ps. lvi, 1

“Be merciful unto me. O God, for man goeth about to devour me: he is daily fighting and troubling me.”

This is the Psalm of the man who is only “sometime afraid” (v. 3). Would God I were afraid only as seldom as “sometime!” It is the machinations and aggression of “man” that trouble him. The height of God’s mercy is set against the depth of man’s cruelty toward his own kind. “I have put my trust in God, and will not fear what flesh can do unto me” (v. 4). “Yea, in God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me.”

The Conquest of Trouble

Ps. lix, 15

“As for me, I will sing of thy power, and will praise thy mercy betimes in the morning: for thou hast been my defence and refuge in the day of my trouble.”

Praise as a means of conquering trouble has been considered. Here we have praise because trouble has been conquered. God has proved His faithfulness. He has been a defence and refuge in the day of trouble. Contemplation of what He has been is the first instinctive movement of the heart upon awakening. There is no spurring of a sluggish gratitude. It is the unprompted and spontaneous hymn of the early morning. Before the tasks and burdens of the day are faced the mind sweeps through the past and rejoices in

The Conquest of Trouble

the power of God so freely placed at the disposal of the troubled.

Ps. lx, 11

“O be thou our help in trouble: for vain is the help of man.”

There are many troubles in which human love and sympathy are an enormous support. But so profound is human life that experiences of such proportions as to be far out of reach of human help, come to us sooner or later. Nothing is adequate to minister to us at such times except an Incarnate God, one whose human career has exhausted the full content of man's life in pain and in joy. It is well to learn this at the beginning so as to know as a fact and not a theory that God is our sufficiency. It is for this reason—that

The Conquest of Trouble

He knows experimentally *and victoriously*—that He can help, when a mere travelling companion whose pain is as great as ours and who, too, fails on the road, can do little or nothing. Every man's competency to help the troubled is proportioned not to his experience alone, but to his experience in Christ, to his victorious experience. We must not scorn human sympathy and help, which is often wondrously rich and beautiful and comforting. It is the great social virtue. But neither may we depend upon it. The strongest man is he who, if put to the supreme test, can say "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." Human help is dear and sweet, when it is of the right sort, but it is not indispensable. To de-

The Conquest of Trouble

pend upon human smiles is to run the risk of eye-service, to bid for popularity, to fear when men frown or look at us askance. The pain of human hostility must be deeply felt by one whose nature is social but it has no right to unsettle us, to deflect us from our course, to break the completeness of our life in and with Christ.

Ps. lxxvi, 10

“Thou broughtest us into the snare: and laidest trouble upon our loins.”

It is of the chastening trouble of the Lord's choosing and assigning that the Psalmist sings. The Master Workman is tempering his steel. He is not afraid to put the metal in the fire because He knows of what sort of stuff it is made.

The Conquest of Trouble

So far from being hurt it will be improved. He snares us into His mercy; He overlays us with the gold of loving kindness that is wrapped in the sack-cloth of trouble. The chastisement clears our dimmed vision, it enlarges our aspirations, it crystallizes our resolution and we make such vows as are born only in the forcing house of trouble. It may look as though we were caught in the plot of the hostile. But it is in God's plot that we are snared. If the enemy plots, God counterplots.

Ps. lxxvi, 12

“I will go into thine house with burnt-offerings: and will pay thee my vows, which I promised with my lips, and spake with my mouth, when I was in trouble.”

The Conquest of Trouble

Trouble is a time for formulating plans for the time of freedom when relief shall have come. Trouble-vows ought not to be mere fear-vows. If so they may never breed action. A vow taken in trouble is perhaps the most dangerous of all vows. It is the commonest, too. When the pressure of trouble is lifted the necessity of the vow may seem annulled. But it is none the less binding. The fulfilment of a trouble-vow is a high form of thanksgiving. It carries into our renewed prosperity and freedom all the blessing and benefit contained in suffering. It is not only putting a formula into effect: it is the germination of a seed containing unlimited and surprising fruitfulness.

The Conquest of Trouble

Ps. lxxix, 18

“And hide not thy face from thy servant, for I am in trouble: O haste thee, and hear me.”

God's hidden face—ah, that is the greatest of great troubles to the pious nature! He is as a man who has taken his journey into a far country. But is it not just here that we have God's highest exhibition of trust in us His stewards? He leaves us to ourselves not because He is indifferent but because He is full of concern for us. It is the parent teaching the child to walk by removing his arm from our clinging hands—yet not removing it too far. The hidden face of God! What does it tell us but that we are equipped for success, that the trouble is inferior to us in strength, that our stored vi-

The Conquest of Trouble

tality gained from glimpses of the king in His beauty is all at our disposal, that God's presence and support are not dependent on our unbroken consciousness of them. Faith does not always call down torrents of consolation, often not so much as a single drop. God is training us in virility and will not caress us for every bruise or scratch: He will not mollicoddle us if we are scared of the dark or a dog shows its teeth at us. Even when His Son was in the deepest gloom, torn by the cruellest pain, God's love demanded a hidden face. Strength to win flows to us through stern channels barren of verdure and unrelieved by flowers of consolation upon its banks. Sometimes when we are disconsolate and aching with loneliness

The Conquest of Trouble

God is nearest to us. Our cry to Him to haste and to hear brings such a pressure of His life upon our need as to build us up permanently in some waste or wrecked portion of our nature.

Ps. lxxi, 18

“O what great troubles and adversities hast thou showed me! and yet didst thou turn and refresh me: yea, and broughtest me from the deep of the earth again.”

The trouble did not overwhelm for all the while the silent, hidden God was sustaining and guiding. Often we cry to God from the midst of trouble, expecting a voice. Because we hear nothing we think our appeal has not been heeded. It is not so. In reality God has given us the greater, for which we did

The Conquest of Trouble

not ask, instead of the lesser, for which we did ask. We asked for a voice and we received an influx of strength, we asked for consolation and we received comfort, we asked for a crumb and we received a loaf. It is a fruitful occupation to reflect on the dark days and hard places of the past when God seemed to have left us alone in spite of our cries and entreaties, and out of which we came safely, even victoriously. Retrospect will reveal to us the presence which at the time was veiled. Memory and imagination are agents of fellowship. They gather in the past and anticipate the future as though they were the present. By the aid of faith all that was is and all that is to be is. There is a false dis-

The Conquest of Trouble

inction made between real and unreal. The refined power of a spiritualized memory or imagination brings about a relationship with men and facts as operative and intense as that which works through physical nearness. (Consider the Communion of Saints in the light of this truth. The conception in the "Blue Bird" of Maeterlinck that the remembered dead are not dead—that there are no dead—is not a figurative fancy but an eternal fact).

This troubled servant makes a magnificent prayer. He does not ask for God's least, but God's greatest. He does not ask God to do all—only enough to enable him to do his own best. "Be thou my stronghold, whereunto I may alway resort; thou hast promised to

The Conquest of Trouble

help me, for thou art my house of defence and my castle" (v. 2). "I will go forth in the strength of the Lord God: and will make mention of thy righteousness only" (v. 14).

Out of the strong comes the sweet. The refreshment of strength is superior to the strength of refreshment. God takes us by the hand, a hand, hidden and unfelt often, and we find ourselves able to explore the darkest recesses of trouble and adversity after the pattern and method of the Man of Sorrows. Guided by Him we go through purgatory as Dante went through. Then God brings us out again into that refreshment and blessedness which only those can have who have been in the deep of the earth. There is but one highway to the honor and comfort of

The Conquest of Trouble

God—trouble. On the yonder side of trouble we can bear the comfort and refreshment and honor of God to our profit, when on the hither side it would only unman us. Piety lapses into sentimentalism, that dangerous foe of religion, if we dwell too much on God's consolation apart from His discipline.

Ps. lxxvii, 2

“In the time of my trouble I sought the Lord: my sore ran, and ceased not in the night season; my soul refused comfort.”

Here again is vivid faith. The affliction is deep indeed. The sickness is an ulcerous sore. Night and day it lays its sufferings upon a disconsolate soul. The wonted appeal from troubled lips is issued Godward. The seeming absence of

The Conquest of Trouble

God is examined. It is found to consist not in the failure of God's presence but in the infirmity of human life, a lack of spiritual perception. A review of the past reveals His unfailing faithfulness. Then all is well. The sting of trouble is drawn. The bitterness of it is lost in the contemplation of God's loyalty to His people. His faithfulness is translated from an abstract theory into a living, personal experience.

Ps. lxxviii, 33

“Therefore their days did he consume in vanity: and their years in trouble.”

This Psalm is the great national anthem of the Hebrews—“Lest we forget.” This particular verse tells of disciplinary, punitive trouble

The Conquest of Trouble

laid as a chastisement upon the shoulders of repeatedly rebellious children. But God's compassion more than matches man's need of it. Repeated back-slidings demanding the punishment of the lash are met by repeated remission of penalties. How exquisite these words are!—

“But he was so merciful, that he forgave their misdeeds: and destroyed them not.

Yea, many a time turned he his wrath away: and would not suffer his whole displeasure to arise.

For he considered that they were but flesh: and that they were even a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again” (vv. 38 ff).

O God, teach us to benefit by thy chastisements. Keep in our re-

The Conquest of Trouble

membrance the certain issue of a sinful life, lest, forgetting Thy holiness, we may suffer Thy whole displeasure.

Ps. lxxxi, 7

“Thou calledst upon me in troubles, and I delivered thee: and heard thee what time as the storm fell upon thee.”

God's assurance to the troubled that He never fails. He is by us at every turn of the wheel, training and shaping us. We must have as a background for the particular consciousness of God's operation in our lives, a general consciousness of God's unshakeable faithfulness. We must know Him as a character. It is this and not an experience or even a series of experiences which suffice in them-

The Conquest of Trouble

selves. The imperishable, unfathomable fact of God-made-man is such a revelation of what God is in Himself that faith is born as we view it. We reach trust less through experimenting as to whether God will help in trouble than by a devout consideration of the Incarnation.

It is God that does deliver. Let us not ascribe our deliverance to chance, or to the course of events, or to the agents and accidents through which God acts. Life is all personal. The personification of common events into acts of God's love is in itself a joy, a security, an invigoration, a transfiguration. For the humble soul it recreates the world. If God is so careful and watchful and active in my affairs and my life, then there

The Conquest of Trouble

is no life in which He is not equally concerned. He has no favorites and no one is lost in the crowd. The noise and turmoil and devastation of the storm cannot interfere between us and God. He hears and He heeds everyone, everywhere.

Ps. lxxvi, 7

“In the time of trouble I will call upon thee: for thou hearest me.”

Here is one in deep trouble—yet not so deep that no ray of light penetrates. God’s supremacy, the ultimate homage of the nations, His greatness, His mercy and compassion, all come under His recognition and consideration. These attributes of God enable His troubled servant to be undismayed and

The Conquest of Trouble

trustful. He is an attentive God who listens to the cry of His children. Having known Him out of trouble, he knows Him in trouble. It is simple and natural that he should make his appeal in his distress. He asks first for strength (v. 16) and then for comfort (v. 17).

Ps. lxxxviii, 2

“For my soul is full of trouble: and my life draweth nigh unto hell.”

There is no darker or more sorrowful poem in literature than this Psalm. One wonders what all the conditions were that called it forth and what the man's ultimate fortunes were. But it is not mere complaint or an unordered cry of pain. It is not a self-conscious,

The Conquest of Trouble

hysterical sob emitted to attract attention. It is a compete statement to God, as His concern, of the whole case from the lips of a devout servant whose prayers constantly besiege God's throne. There is naught in his soul but trouble. His life is hovering on the edge of the grave, devoid of strength, no better than dead. The depths have been plumbed so that there is no deeper abyss into which he can descend. Loneliness so unrelieved that God's indignation lies upon him and his acquaintances abhor him. He is blind with pain. He asks if God's mercy and power go deep enough to comprehend and succor such extremity. But he accepts it all and waits—that acme of discipline. That his waiting was justified and his trust and his

The Conquest of Trouble

endurance, the existence of the Psalm testifies. God delivered him out of all his troubles.

Since our Lord fulfilled in His Person and experience all the trouble that this Psalm expresses and more, no one can doubt God's sympathy. When in our darkest sorrow or most riotous trouble we call to Him for succour, we call to One whose sorrows and troubles were immeasurably worse and who won for us fresh possibilities of faith and patience (Heb. ii, 9-18; iv, 14-16).

Ps. xci, 15

“He shall call upon me and I will hear him: yea, I am with him in trouble, I will deliver him, and bring him to honor.”

Here God declares Himself, in

The Conquest of Trouble

conference with His servant, to be faithful and true. He is certain protection both *from* and *in* trouble. The former is His lesser, the latter His greater self-manifestation. Evasion of the untried is after all only postponement. The untried is the unconquered. When we have gone *through* trouble we have been *thorough*. With God as partner we achieve freedom by conquest, not by retreat. There is such a thing as a final defeat, when the enemy will have been so crushed as never to have the power to assail, or even to resist assault. In this sense our Lord has inflicted final defeat upon sin, trouble, and death. Having gone victoriously through each they are dead to Him and he to them. Faith means the union of our lives with His victor-

The Conquest of Trouble

ious experience. "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more. Death hath no more dominion over Him." There is no blinking the fact of the reality of the dark mysteries, but they are confronted by the superior reality of the mystery of light and life and love. There is the reality of negation and the reality of affirmation, the reality of darkness and the reality of light. Indeed negation is but a lower, and often merely a vicious, form of affirmation. There is nothing to gain and much to lose in courage and freedom in denying the reality of the hostile forces of life. An unclouded motive, an unbroken will, and an unwavering purpose are victorious even though hostile forces damage or overwhelm all objective accom-

The Conquest of Trouble

plishment of the same. Moral and spiritual force becomes a menace of the first order when it is the expression of a personal will. Moral character does not exist except thus. The negative moral, is the positive evil, character. It can be met only by the exercise of the faculties through which it gains its strength.

As to what trouble is, the Psalter, bit by bit, reveals. It has a variety of manifestations. We must first of all in the consideration of our own personal trouble make sure that what we call trouble is not that phase of morbid selfishness, so common, which is known as self-pity. God is not sympathetic with, indeed He is unheedful of, artificial or unreal trouble—the trouble of accidie or any trouble which

The Conquest of Trouble

remains in our lives after we have the clear illumination which shows us that we can rid our life of it by an act of choice or a sustained purpose. God puts Himself at our disposal to fix our choice and to give stability to our purpose.

Ps. cii, 2

“Hide not thy face from me in the time of my trouble: incline thine ear unto me when I call; O hear me and that right soon.”

The trouble here is that of the devout soul that fails of the consciousness of God. It is that trouble of troubles, loneliness. He is small and of no account and yet he cannot live, nor can he see hope for anyone, until the Lord's glory appear. The trouble of the hidden face is often the whole trouble. A

The Conquest of Trouble

man does not ask for God simply for the comfort He brings but for His own sweet sake. "Taste and see how gracious the Lord is." The friend mourns because the Friend is silent or averts His face. Trouble, whatever its dimensions, would shrink into inconsequence or become quite subsidiary, if God would show His loving face. The child's terror in the night flees with instant feet at the quieting sound of the mother's voice or the touch of her soothing hand. If one knows one is with God and God is on our side anything can be borne. There is such a thing as being never less alone than when alone* (S. John xvi, 32). "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" was a cry of the trouble of desola-

* "Nunquam minus solus, quam cum solus."—Saint Bernard, *De Vita Sol.* c. 4.

The Conquest of Trouble

tion and loneliness. The need was not the need of even the richest gifts of personality but of Personality, of imparted presence. To some, to the best, impersonal gifts, things with no association, wealth of whatever sort, are valueless. All that is of worth is personality or that which is so impregnated with personality as to have semi-human character by virtue of association.

Ps. civ, 29

“When thou hidest thy face, they are troubled; when thou takest away their breath, they die, and are turned again to their dust.”

Once more the hidden face and in consequence trouble. The whole creation groaneth and travaileth when the face is averted. When

The Conquest of Trouble

active providence fails all things collapse in the ruin of death. The Beatific Vision must mean the final defeat of all trouble. Men reach it through much tribulation. The courage of facing trouble brings us at last face to face with Him in whom are no shadows.

It is good to think of health and beauty of whatever sort being the reflection of the glory in the face of God. God is again looking on His creation and pronouncing it very good. Nature, recognizing the favor in the face of the Lord, responds by breaking forth into bud and blossom color and song (v. 30).

Ps. cvii, 6

“So they cried unto the Lord in their trouble: and he delivered them from their distress.”

The Conquest of Trouble

In this Psalm every sort of trouble is depicted and the Lord is the universal deliverer. Self-induced trouble, trouble that comes from foolishness and wickedness, trouble that is incidental to the pursuit of one's vocation (v. 23), all come under the beneficent operation of God's compassion (cf. also vv. 39-43). There are two distinct kinds of self-induced trouble coming from exactly opposite directions—one the trouble born of pride and self-will, the other the trouble born of humility and obedience. Neither kind is directly sought. The proud expect to escape the penalty of self-will; the humble anticipate the hardships which may accompany obedience. The former are in the end disagreeably surprised: and the latter are

The Conquest of Trouble

neither surprised nor dismayed. The troubles of mere sons of men come in spite of volitional antagonism and every endeavor to dodge them; the troubles of the Sons of God come as the result of volitional activity in the direction of God's purposes. Our Lord's troubles were the most conspicuous ever experienced. They were representative of the sort of trouble of all who actively share His sonship (cf. 1 S. Peter ii, 19 ff.). There is a trouble due to our vocation. Each vocation has its own particular hardships and perils. "They that go down to the sea in ships: and occupy their business in great waters," have their special difficulties. Sea-sickness appears to be included (vv. 26, 27). At any rate

The Conquest of Trouble

“when they cry unto the Lord in their trouble: he delivereth them out of their distress.” the oppressed and defeated are not forgotten or unwatched by God. Their trouble, too, is His concern and He places His best at their disposal. The issue of trouble is admission into the security and comfort of His own household (vv. 39, 41).

Ps. cxvi, 4

“I shall find trouble and heaviness, and I will call upon the Name of the Lord: O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul.”

The fact that one has been in trouble and come through it does not mean that he will thereafter be immune from it. But God's pledge that He will take us through our

The Conquest of Trouble

next trouble is found in our safe passage through our last trouble.

God's Name is the spoken expression, the vocal or written symbol, of His inner self. Relative to trouble His Name is Deliverer. The historic Psalmist had been given up for dead. He had tasted all the troubles of the valley of the shadow of death. God was his Deliverer (vv. 8, 9).

Ps. cxviii, 5

“I called upon the Lord in trouble: and the Lord heard me at large.”

The answer to the petition is greater than the petition. The course of God's mercy is on a level, the highest level, never beneath. “His mercy endureth for ever.”

God is ever more ready to hear

The Conquest of Trouble

than we to pray: He gives more and better than we desire, certainly than we deserve. He does not merely rescue us from the curling waves of trouble through which He carries us to the shore. Far from leaving us only saved from death, He supports us into the sunny, fertile fields which lie above the rocky coast. Salvation only begins with rescue. It eventuates in perpetual comradeship with the Saviour. It is introduction into the revived and perfected society of the saved, the Communion of Saints. Yes, God hears in a large way the thin, shrill cry of the troubled. The "from" of salvation is the porch to the "into." He saves us from sin into righteousness, from barrenness to fruitfulness.

The Conquest of Trouble

Once more we see the prayer in trouble answered by God's revelation of Himself to the trouble, so that trouble is not removed but made habitable and useful. "The Lord is on my side: I will not fear what man doeth unto me. The Lord taketh my part with them that help me: therefore shall I see my desire upon mine enemies." God becomes the companion-champion of the troubled one, whose troubles are due to his high vocation and his lofty purpose. Fortwith he becomes courageous with the courage of the indomitable. He needs no human props and stays. The high prestige of officials is of no consequence to him. The hostility of mankind only stimulates him to new purpose. The surging assaults of the enemy do not bring

The Conquest of Trouble

him to bay. Rather do they challenge him to triumphant counter assault. The Lord is with him as Help, Strength, Song, Salvation. God is in Himself all victory, therefore defeat for one who is God's is not only impossible but unthinkable.

Ps. cxi, 50

“The same is my comfort in my trouble: for thy word hath quickened me.”

God's Word is the comfort of the troubled, a lantern unto my feet and a light unto my paths. A word is primarily a voice, something uttered as a symbol of the mind of the speaker. A voice is a comfort in trouble. The voice of sympathy quickens and cheers.

But God's Word is not only a

The Conquest of Trouble

symbol of Himself. It is also the express image of His Person. His Word is Himself (S. John i, 1 ff.). He is His own pledge and symbol. God's Word is not only a promise, it is also the realization of His promise. The Written Word of God becomes a living Word when we take it from Him as present. If God changed from day to day or century to century, a historical Word, a Word registered as final (Heb. i, 1 ff.), would be impossible. All we could hope for would be a message for the times. But just because God is unchangeable, the Written Word is our perpetual inspiration and guide. It is for us as much as for the men of the earliest centuries. Its plain meanings, which far exceed its obscurities, are God's living voice to living

The Conquest of Trouble

men. As man changes and grows the meaning of Holy Scripture is enlarged. We can never outrun or outgrow the message of the Word.

Ps. cxix, 57

“Before I was troubled I went wrong: but now have I kept thy word.”

Trouble can harden. It can also fertilize. It depends on how we adjust ourselves to it.

It is not easy to understand why trouble is necessary for the mellowing and enlarging of human life. Joy and prosperity seem by no means essential to, and are often destructive of, character. The sufferers are the great. Or rather the great come to their heritage of greatness through tribulation. Happiness is a tinsel gift belong-

The Conquest of Trouble

ing to blue skies and zephyr breezes. Blessedness is the gift of God's own high condition which often comes on the wings of the storm in the darkness of night. Happiness is wilted by the first blast of adversity. Blessedness sets her sails to the storm and discovers new and wonderful lands under the impetus of the tempest's blast. Happiness is the perishable joy of the sons of men. Blessedness is the imperishable joy of the Sons of God.

The kindest thing God can do to those who go wrong is to trouble them. Through His kindness He made fire to scorch and burn careless fingers. Out of compassion and because He loves His children, He gives every sin its own whip of scorpions wherewith it must lash

The Conquest of Trouble

its victims after it has sated them. It has no choice.

In this verse the effect of the lash is described or implied. It roused the sinner to penitence, penitence that embraced God's commandments. "Now have I kept thy word."

Ps. cxix, 71

"It is good for me that I have been in trouble: that I may learn thy statutes."

Trouble arrests the wrong doer in his course. That is its first function. It is a warning and deterrent. Then, to the penitent, it becomes a positive asset. He does not discard it from his memory. He uses it as an instructive discipline, a schoolmaster to teach the statutes of God. Often things

The Conquest of Trouble

which are bitter and hard at the moment become a great source of thankfulness and gladness. Herein consists the alchemy of Christianity. It puts the bitter herbs of trouble into its crucible and they are charmed into a life-giving elixir.

Life, as we know it, must have contrasts. Its shadows are the product of light playing upon its movements. Its antitheses are established by reason of its completeness. A comprehensive affirmative involves a daring contradiction. The contradiction becomes an impediment and a menace only when it ceases to be abstract and takes shape in personal character. The all-conquering might of life as interpreted in Christ is exhibited when personalized evil is made to

The Conquest of Trouble

declare the glory of God (Rom. iii). The great affirmation of God's Word is met by the contradiction of evil, which in turn is finally responded to by being bound to the chariot of righteousness and captivity is led captive.

Ps. cix, 75

“I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right: and that thou of very faithfulness hast caused me to be troubled.”

The Psalmist concurs in the ordering of God and the eternal wisdom of His judgments. Whatever happens can be accepted tranquilly if we know that He who controls the course of events is right and cannot err. Thus when trouble comes, however bewildering at first, we begin with the conviction

The Conquest of Trouble

that its origin and purpose, when it lays hold of us, are beneficent. It is fruitful of much rebellion and misery to confuse suffering with injury and malevolence. If our primary belief is in God as benevolent and beneficent Providence, then our earliest attitude toward even unexpected trouble will be patient and hopefully expectant. It is the curious and unwarranted assumption, that man as man has a right not only to unbroken happiness but also a happiness according to his own individual conception of happiness, which sets people off on the wrong foot.

We need not believe that God is the originator and direct agent of every trouble. That could be if there were no wills of the same sort as the Divine will, however limited

The Conquest of Trouble

in scope, which temporarily can and do defy Him. Many troubles are due to the thoughtless or wicked movement of human wills or other evil agents. But the great thing is that the very moment trouble, even when thus originated, is born, God seizes upon it and controls it. Between the time it is launched in our direction and the time it enters into our lives as a fact of experience, God alters its character. It is, so to speak, wrested from the power of the will that originates and made to subserve the exactly opposite purpose to that intended. The wrath of man in this way turns to God's praise.

Here, without searching out how his trouble originated, the Psalmist sees God operating it out of His

The Conquest of Trouble

very faithfulness. God never takes short views of life. He always deals with us in relation to our whole character and as immortal men. There are some old and simple thoughts and phrases which are very profound. "God knows best." "One cannot understand now but some day all will be clear." "I am sure good will come out of it." "Thou of very faithfulness hast caused me to be troubled." An understanding of, and trust in, God's essential character, and a high and wise philosophy of life, lie behind such conclusions.

Then, too, when such is a developing conviction in our souls, human life, in the midst of the multitude of troubles that encompass it, rises resplendent. It assumes a majesty that is divine. It is not

The Conquest of Trouble

only undaunted but triumphant. It not only acquiesces, but embraces, the outwardly untoward (cf. 2 Cor. iv, 8 ff.). There is no act more wonderful than that of kissing the cross. It is the most loving, the most virile, the most beautiful act of life (cf. 2 Cor. xii, 5; Gal. vi, 14).

Ps. cix, 107

“I am troubled above measure; quicken me, O Lord, according to thy word.”

A superb prayer! It is a marvel to me how men with the meagre advantages and spiritual privilege of these unnamed writers of the distant past could rise to such unparalleled heights, to such an understanding of God's mind, to such penetrating faith. It is all

The Conquest of Trouble

a testimony to the close relationship between God and the person. The world of the least blessed among us is more full of opportunities of knowing God than the sky is of stars. The trouble with the Christian is a wealth of good things which he had become so familiar with as to use few of them, perhaps none, to their full value. In long lonely trips I have come to appreciate the value of the Dante I carried with me or the single book that I chose as companion, in a way quite impossible in the literary profusion of my library.

The degree of this trouble is superlative — “above measure.” This rendering of the original is one that could not be improved upon. The troubled one does not petition for an outward separation

The Conquest of Trouble

for the inner quickening promised from the trouble, for its removal by annihilation or even exile, but by God to the hard pressed and suffering, which will enable him to annihilate or annul its force by the assault of superior might. The cross has been kissed, indeed. There is no courage equal to this, no victory greater.

Ps. cxi, 143

“Trouble and heaviness have taken hold upon me; yet is my delight in thy commandments.”

The servant of God is so inwardly quickened that his resources are never exhausted. His outward sorrow can never contradict his inward joy except seemingly. Adversity may even increase the sharpness and intensity

The Conquest of Trouble

of inner joy. His poverty is only that emptiness which gives God room to dwell.

More than that, the trouble and heaviness that weigh down the soul are unable to quench the delight in God's commandments which is the dominant emotion of this brave man. Here is one of the mysteries. The developed spiritual life can have such a passion for God and the things of God, that no amount of counter-pressure can extinguish its flame. There is a joy which no man, which the world, cannot rob us of. There may be deliberate and active efforts to thwart and bring to naught our labors for God and to overwhelm us with embarrassment and defeat (v. 157), but it cannot so much as deflect us from our path. Our purpose, quickened

The Conquest of Trouble

as it is by God, is too strong and too commanding to be affected by any force short of a Divine force —“I do not swerve from thy testimonies.” Our stability is so sure and so strongly set that persecution and attack do not cause it to sway any more than the rage of the tempest shakes the rock that it flings its might upon.

“Many there are that trouble me, and persecute me”—There are the deliberate haters and persecutors, who in most lives are few. There are those who temperamentally trouble us—and we them. There are the teasers and tormentors who do not mean ill, and yet they trouble us. Let us be sure when complaining of other people that they have not equal or greater reason to complain of us. It is

The Conquest of Trouble

not uncommon to find, among administrators and others, those who are always faulting their subordinates and co-workers as being troublesome. They are blind to the fact that it is not others but themselves who are the chief, perhaps the sole, trouble-makers. It may be laid down as a general principle that a person who is perpetually having trouble with others is more an offender than he is offended. He must look for remedy in his own conversion rather than in the removal or conversion of others.

Ps. cxx, 1

“When I was in trouble, I called upon the Lord: and he heard me.”

The answer to prayer is here recognized, a simple and logical

The Conquest of Trouble

thing it would appear. Yet how often is it the case that we go on day after day importuning God, blind to the fact that He is answering us by acts rather than by voices. The reason is that we fail to mark God's operation in ordinary affairs. Our godless system of education teaches us that the universe is controlled by the gods Evolution, Gravitation and the rest of the galaxy in the scientific pantheon. God does frequently answer prayer by the inexplicable and extraordinary. But more often does He perform the continuous miracle of trouble and we cry to Him He carries us safely, quietly through. We wonder how it was afterwards that we were able to endure. The reason was because He quickened us and sustained us from within. The

The Conquest of Trouble

outward God is harder to find than the inward God. The Kingdom of God is within you. Words and explanations are mists and veils to one who is without a centre, final and absolute, to his universe.

It is a profitable exercise to detach results from their secondary causes and link them directly to God. Even little things like the daily routine blessings of life ought to be consciously attributed to God. Grace before meals is a good representative act. Thanksgiving after is still better.

A recognition of answer to prayer leads to fresh activity of faith (v. 2). It is astonishing how even a little progress in our walk by faith opens up the landscape. Victory always leads to victory, progress to progress (Phil. iii, 13,

The Conquest of Trouble

14), prayer answered to prayer to be answered. Beauty that we never dreamed of lies just around that turn of the road; obstacles, which at an earlier stage of our development would have routed us, appear only to be routed.

Whatever may have been the trouble from which this writer had been delivered the new one that confronted him is in himself. Our worst impediments like our best opportunities are within (vv. 2, 3). Outward associations and influences may also be inimical but these can be borne if our heart is right within us.

Ps. cxxiii, 1

“Lord remember David: and all his trouble.”

Of course much of David's trou-

The Conquest of Trouble

ble was the result of his sin. But this reference is to the other kind of self-induced trouble, the trouble of high emprise, than which there is none greater. He made a vow to God to build him a house. It shines out of history as a consuming purpose. Because he was a man of war and trouble he was not permitted to see his desire consummated. But he fired his son with his purpose (1 Chron. xxviii, 2 ff.).

Just think of the obstacles which had to be surmounted before David's ideal could be realized! Just think of the ease with which unfriendly forces swing us out of the path of our fixed purpose! David felt the pull of his vow through every barrier that blocked the way. It was not merely that he

The Conquest of Trouble

had made up his mind and sworn to accomplish a given task. There are those who are carried to their goal by pride, who do at all costs what they set themselves to do, but whose interest in the intrinsic worth of the undertaking diminishes to vanishing point. It was not thus with David. He desired no absolution from his task for his task was his joy. The Temple, which was never to bear his name, stood to this man whose life had been spent in tents, as the most glorious reality that earth contained. Its columns and porches and walls he saw so clearly that nothing else was more clear. Nor would he give to the Lord that which cost him nothing. He counted nothing a sacrifice that contributed to his purpose. "All

The Conquest of Trouble

his trouble'' bulked large indeed, but he took almost a savage joy in hurling his stone of defiance and death at every enemy that interposed. His purpose was greater than himself. After all it made no real difference who gave God His House provided it was given and given worthily. To a man per-meated with a sense of self-importance it is a humiliation to fail to achieve what he sets out to do. Much of his incentive to action consists in his desire to have his name plastered all over his achievements. He never wishes to relinquish that which is his or in which he has a share. He is, as it were, a miser who hoards all that his hands touch. But the man of God receives a trust from God and his highest reward is found in being

The Conquest of Trouble

able to lay in the hands of God his completed stewardship. The greatest of David's many troubles was that because he was a man of war the building of the Temple had to be delayed. This even did not discourage him. "And David said, Solomon my son is young and tender, and the house that is to be builded for the Lord must be exceeding magnificent, of fame and of glory throughout all countries: I will therefore now make preparation for it. So David prepared abundantly before his death" (1 Chron. xxii, 5). That which was the all-absorbing purpose in life was the all-absorbing purpose in death. That which made the Temple famous and glorious far, far beyond David's expectations and dreams throughout countries un-

The Conquest of Trouble

named and centuries unborn was the height and purity, the stability and unselfishness, the passion and power of David's devotion to his trust. "Lord, remember David and all his trouble." Each sacrifice that David made, each obstacle courageously surmounted by him, every argument calculated to bend him from his vow which he quietly reflected, was as sweet savour to God. When David did at last lie down to rest in the narrow tabernacle of his grave, he rested well.

O God, who hast not yet rejected the unworthy and flickering flame of my service, fix my purpose in thine own self from whom it came, that being fed by Thee who art the Source of all light, I may not fail to hold aloft the torch of Thy glory by humbly living in Thee and for

The Conquest of Trouble

Thee, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Ps. cxxxvi, 23

“Who remembered us when we were in trouble: for his mercy endureth forever.”

Prayer must sooner or later melt into thanksgiving as petition is crowned by answer. The high level of God's compassion, unbroken and sublime, includes that same sort of remembrance of us in our trouble which encompassed with its saving folds the dying robber who humbly asked to be remembered in his trouble (S. Luke xxiii, 42, 43). Oh the wealth of God's remembrance of us! It is not a passing thought but a permanent solicitude. It is the remembrance of a parent's imperishable, unfathomable love.

The Conquest of Trouble

Those who have felt it cannot help bursting into song. Our consideration has been chiefly of appeals for help in trouble. Here we have joyous praise in recognition of help given. A moment ago we were, so to speak, reminding God of His servant David's trouble in His behalf. Now we are reminding ourselves of God's trouble in our behalf. Let us recount the great things God has done for us—how He has created us and given us “our brother the sun, who brings us the day and who brings us the light,” who is fair, who “shines with very great splendor” and “signifies to us Thee;” who has endowed for us the night with “our sister the moon and the stars, the which He has set clear and lovely in heaven;” who has blessed our nation among and

The Conquest of Trouble

above the nations; who has conducted us through our personal woes and sufferings; who has fed us with the fine wheat flour of His luxuriant bounty—"O give thanks unto the God of heaven: for his mercy endureth forever. O give thanks unto the Lord of lords: for his mercy endureth forever."

Ps. cxxxviii, 7

"Though I walk in the midst of trouble, yet shalt thou refresh me: thou shalt stretch forth thy hand upon the furiousness of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me."

Praise for past blessing leads straight into confidence for days to come. He who has learned to thank God for the recognized support of yesterday will be possessed

The Conquest of Trouble

of a heart that will stand fast and not be afraid of any evil tidings. That heavy veil between to-day and to-morrow! Shall I fear for what may be there? Never. Though my whole environment and circumstances spell trouble, though my whole universe is trouble, "yet shalt thou refresh me." It was so yesterday; it is so to-day; and to-morrow it will be the same. The fiery trial that is to try me is the furnace of God's refining, whatever furious guise, whatever programme of frightfulness, it may adopt. God's faithfulness has been tried and not found wanting. Upon it I build. If trouble thickens as years advance, why complain? Our strength is the cumulative strength of God's watchful providence; our faith is the quick-

The Conquest of Trouble

ened faith of God's promises realized in past experience. No, tomorrow must not arouse thoughts of dismay but of serene confidence —“The Lord shall make good his loving-kindness toward me: yea, thy mercy, O Lord, endureth forever.”

Ps. cxxxiii 11

“Quicken me, O Lord, for thy Name's sake: and for thy righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble.”

In these later Psalms we are in the high altitude of praise as pure as a pearl. This particular Psalm is the last plaint of the Psalter. There is no further reference to trouble after this verse. It is good to have it as a sentinel guarding the portal of praise, challenging us if

The Conquest of Trouble

we think our lips are well exercised to sing songs to God. They alone can laugh with the laughter of God's joy, who have first wept with God's tears. Again, not only those who have known trouble but those who have come through it with some degree of triumph, can take the higher notes of praise. Those who have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb can alone cry with a loud voice, more musical than bells of silver and harps of gold, "Salvation unto our God who sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb" (Rev. vii, 10 ff.).

The last prayer in relation to trouble is the best. It is a prayer for inner quickening that gives man superiority to whatever he

The Conquest of Trouble

comes upon, whether joy and prosperity or trouble and adversity. God, whose Name is Deliverer, is adjured. For the vindication of His righteousness salvation is sought after. The prayer is not that of a spiritual novice. It is the prayer of maturity and rich experience. None know how to pray for spiritual gifts like the spiritually gifted. Those who have won wealth by prayer are the ones who are most conscious of their own poverty and of wealth unachieved. The truest friend of God is most deeply convinced that he is but a servant consumed with a passionate ambition to be a friend. The height of his ambition is to will as God willeth, to desire as God desireth, to love as God loveth—
“Teach me to do the thing that

The Conquest of Trouble

pleaseth thee; for thou art my God: let thy loving Spirit lead me forth into the land of righteousness" (v. 10).

Thus it is that we come to the close of our consideration of the "trouble" Psalms, with trouble upon our horizon and praise upon our lips.—Now we are in a position to enter into the calm atmosphere of the Peace of God.

The Peace of God

The Peace of God

The two things which the following musings set forth are, the value of using references, and the way Scripture interprets Scripture.

5. Luke 1, 78, 79

“The dayspring from on high shall visit us, to shine upon them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death; to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

The greatest need of the unenlightened is enlightenment: the greatest need of the enlightened and the crowning gift of God is peace. Note the extraordinary delicacy of thought and expression — ἀνατολή ἐξ ὕψους κ.τ.λ.

Joy is ordinarily over-valued; peace under-valued. There is no

The Peace of God

condition higher in God's scale than His peace. Happiness is a word never once used by Our Lord. It is too thin and flimsy a thing for His children. The words He uses and puts on the lips of His teachers are "blessed" (μακάριος) and "peace" (εἰρήνη).

Peace, in God's mind, is not an absence of agitation or activity. It is the activity of complete harmony where the agent is in the full light and walks in relation to the whole as it is thus revealed by God. Peace is a way wherein the children of God walk together.

Peace is the result of God's light, the adoption of His way of looking at things. Man's contrivances and imaginings cannot issue in peace. This is as true of the relations between nation and nation as between

The Peace of God

man and man. They begin in an acceptance of God's purposes as He makes them known to us. The whole of God's struggle with Israel was to get them to accept and remain loyal to His simple laws. Neither Israel nor any nation before or since has accepted Him unreservedly and fully. Therefore there can be no peace of God among the nations. (cf. The prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah wherein are set forth the first principles of national life according to the mind of God, and the sure disaster consequent upon disregard of them.) Isaiah is conspicuously a prophet of peace, living, though he did, amidst wars and rumors of war.

In a sense peace is the gift of God to the individual—the result

The Peace of God

of reconciliation between the life of man and God. But there can be no large peace to the man whose horizons are less vast than the horizons of God. The moment a man actively enters into the life and peace of God, his relationships are with all creation. The light reveals our full world. We are too big to attempt to live in anything less than the whole world. Peace is the product of life in the light. Our peace is developed according as, one after another, we draw into our fellowship everyone and everything. When the sun is our brother and the death of the body our sister, then can we praise God with all His creatures in a hymn of harmony, that is, of God's peace.

Peace is the heritage of all and

The Peace of God

not of a few. It must be universal because it consists of universal relationships. The promise is: "Peace, peace, to him that is far off and to him that is near, saith the Lord; and I will heal him" (Is. lvii, 19. cf. Eph. ii, 17).

Because sin "separates between you and your God" there can be no peace for the sinner (Is. lix, 2). Sin is self-will and separates from fellowship. Sin is war. It leaves us alone, unprotected, with the certainty of ultimate defeat, for "vice shall not prevail against wisdom" (Wis. vii, 30).

Self-will involves darkness, the withdrawal of the countenance of God (Is. lix, 9). It is the contradiction and destruction of community life. It is the self-appraisal of nations that issues in war.

The Peace of God

Wherever there is the exaltation of self-interest above the common weal, there is not only no peace but the shock of battle.

The fine generic term "sin" covers the whole case. A sinner can never be a son of peace. "The way of peace they know not . . . they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goeth therein doth not know peace" (Is. lix, 8. cf. lvii, 20).

Isaiah knows how to express terrible truth terribly: "The wicked are like the troubled sea; for it cannot rest, and its waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked" (Is. lvii, 20).

S. Luke ii, 14

"Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace among men in
whom he is well pleased."

The Peace of God

This reading, though not as rhythmic as, or bound up with Christmas associations like, that of the A. V., has greater depth of meaning, containing all the other does and much besides.

Here again the high place that peace holds is declared. It is the supreme gift to men of the Incarnation. It is the garden in which God's flowers of righteousness bloom. Our Lord *is* that which He *gives*. All His gifts are personal in essence and in direction. God is love. God is peace. "His name shall be called . . . Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end" (Is. ix, 6). Separate gifts from the giver, denude them of their personal character, and they can only touch our sur-

The Peace of God

face. A person who lives wholly in a world of things must himself deteriorate into a thing.

There is no more searching word about peace than: "He is our peace, who hath made both one" (Eph. ii, 14). All mechanical means of achieving peace between man and man are as inadequate as a prayer wheel is to establish peace between God and man. Peace between nation and nation can be solidified neither by the common interests of trade, the vaporings of conventional diplomacy, nor the bullying of armaments (cf. Wis. ix, 14).

Heaven's peace *on earth* is God's purpose, announced when the first breath of the Incarnation awoke the skies with splendor and song. There has never been so wonderful

The Peace of God

a Utopia conceived by the human mind as that proclaimed by God in Christ. Men think the human Utopias possible and grope after them. Christ's Utopia is the only possible one. Those who believe and act on this are "men in whom He is well pleased." The most Utopian prayer that is offered is the prayer most commonly on human lips—the Lord's Prayer (cf. S. Luke xii, 32). The larger hope is kept alive by it. No one able to offer the Lord's Prayer can expect too much of or for himself or mankind. Cf. the rich expectation of men whose lives were set in conditions unfavorable to hope (e. g. Tobit. xiii, 14-18). God was well pleased in our Lord because He willed all that God willed, He expected all that God expected, He

The Peace of God

worked for all that God worked. "Thou art my beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased" (S. Luke iii, 22 cf. Is. xlii, 1-4). Our Lord's life had inner peace, the peace which abides even when everything within and without conspire together against it. "In God's will is our peace."

"The Lord will bless *his people* with peace" (Ps. xxix, 10). Those who take God's righteousness as their own purpose are His people. "Righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Ps. lxxxv, 10). Righteousness and peace move in a beneficent circle. Each contributes to the other. "Great peace have they which love thy law: and they have none occasion of stumbling" (Ps. cxix, 165).

The Peace of God

Peace will always be a theme to catch people's attention. So desirable a possession is it that the powers of evil use it as a lure. The false prophets promise peace to the wicked saying: "I will give you assured peace in this place" (Jer. xiv, 13). Part of the glory of the second Temple was that it was to be the abode of peace: "The latter glory shall be greater than the former, saith the Lord of Hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts" (Hag. ii, 9). It was the offer of peace that made the early preaching of Christianity attractive: "The word which he sent unto the children of Israel, preaching good tidings of peace by Jesus Christ" (Acts x, 36).

The Peace of God

Peace, mystic peace, is not thrust upon us. It is simply made available. We must appropriate it. Like the Kingdom of Heaven it must be taken by force. It calls for effort and the use of that which is eternal within us. "Being therefore justified by faith, let us have (or, we have) peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. v, 1). Self-donation even unto death was the instrument through which our Lord made peace available. "Through him to reconcile all things unto himself, having made peace through the blood of the cross" (Col. i, 20). Self-donation even unto death is the instrument by which we appropriate the peace thus made available.

The Peace of God

S. Luke ii, 29

“Now lettest thou thy servant depart, O Lord, according to the word, in peace.”

Simeon refuses to die until his eyes have seen God's salvation. Seeing the Person who is the Saviour, he has seen that which flows from Him. Abraham saw from afar and went to his fathers in peace (cf. S. John viii, 56; Gen. xv, 15). He who sees, has. The world lives by its visions. To see is to possess, to achieve. There is no true ideal to-day, however impractical for the times, which is not necessary. Our means for reaching the ideal may be crude and inadequate. That does not detract from the value and reality of the end sought for. Lying behind the dream of every visionary is the

The Peace of God

operation of faith which in the end must conquer. The prophet or seer possesses by anticipation. He draws the future into the present and lives in it. It becomes his only present and all things are viewed and construed in its light. Our degree of peace depends upon the clearness of our vision.

“Amen, now lettest Thou Thy servant, Lord,
Depart in peace, according to Thy Word.
Although mine eyes may not have fully seen
Thy great salvation, surely there have been
Enough of sorrow and enough of sight
To show the way from darkness into light ;
And Thou hast brought me, through a wilderness of pain
To love the sorest paths, if soonest they attain.

“Enough of sorrow for the heart to cry,
‘Not for myself, nor for my kind, am I ;’
Enough of sight for Reason to disclose,
‘The more I learn the less my knowledge grows.’
Ah, not as citizens of this our sphere,
But aliens militant we sojourn here,
Invested by the hosts of Evil and of Wrong
Till Thou shalt come again with all Thine Angel throng.

The Peace of God

“As Thou hast found me ready to Thy call,
Which ordered me to watch the outer wall,
And, quitting joys and hopes that once were mine,
To pace with patient step this narrow line,
Oh, may it be that, coming soon or late,
Thou still shalt find Thy soldier at the gate,
Who then may follow Thee till sight needs not to prove,
And faith shall be dissolved in knowledge of Thy love.”

GEORGE JOHN ROMANES

Every Christian life must renew the *Nunc Dimittis* as an experience. In the Saviour we see full salvation. It is no selfish affair. It includes all nations. It claims for the unborn such blessings as we enjoy only in part, except so far as seeing, we possess. The great lack of our day in education is that the senses are trained all out of proportion to insight or faith. The result is frantic materialism. Supposing from early childhood the young were exercised in faith with the same diligence they are exer-

The Peace of God

cised in reason, what a difference there would be in the world outlook! We need for our children schools of faith in which those who have learned to see, will give their best effort to develop the sixth sense.

S. Luke 1, 5, 6,

“Into whatsoever house ye shall enter first say, Peace be to this house. And if a son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon him; but if not, it shall turn to you again.”

This is an injunction to evangelists or preachers of the Word. The errand of the evangelist is peace—peace as God knows it, peace within outwards. The peaceable purpose carries with it a peaceful tempera-

The Peace of God

ture; inner hostility breeds a like spirit in those we meet. If a man bent on peaceable ends meets one who is a son of peace, *i. e.*, the general tenor of whose life is the same, unity results. The spirit of conciliation is the most powerful of weapons against the turbulent and the rash and the self-willed. "Thus shall ye say to him that liveth in prosperity, Peace be both unto thee, and peace be to thine house, and peace be to all that thou hast" (1 Sam. xxv, 6ff.). This was a friendly greeting to a churl—a pledge to Nabal of David's friendly feeling and intentions. Nabal need have no uneasiness as to David's purpose. Similarly David accepts Abigail's friendly overtures: "Go up in peace to thine house; see I have hearkened

The Peace of God

to thy voice and accepted thy person" (1 Sam. xxv, 35).

When we are expecting to meet those whose spirit we know to be friendly and peaceable, there is no need of nerving ourselves, so to speak, to preserve a peaceable temper. It is when we know we are going to meet the obstreperous and the militant, or, perhaps, are entering into a wholly unknown country, that we should be sure to have our "feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace" (Eph. vi, 15). We must be "sons of peace." That is, men who in close kinship with peace are obedient to its behests and disciplines. Peace is as it were a parent capable of directing and protecting her children (cf. Is. liv, 13; Matt. vi, 9). This truth works in a circle—

The Peace of God

God's children are full of peace; those who are full of peace are God's children.

The Evangelist's benediction, "Peace be to this house," is not a formula. It is the willing and placing of peace in the house by the direct purpose of the visitor. It is the bestowal of the guest's best upon his host and family.

1. Apply this to the minor social relationships of life.

2. Also in, e. g., diplomacy, business matters, etc.

Supposing our peace-giving intention is frustrated while there is loss in our immediate negotiations and fellowship, to us there is net gain. "My prayer returned into my own bosom" (Ps. xxxv, 13). Even when prayer for others fails of its direct purpose, it blesses its

The Peace of God

author, coming back to him with renewed power to be used when opportunity next presents itself. The exercise of the spirit of peace in adverse conditions develops it as favorable conditions are powerless to do. In the light of this thought consider S. Matt. v, 9 ff., and kindred passages.

S. Luke xi, 21

“When the strong man fully armed guardeth his own court, his goods are in peace.”

This is one of several militant-peace passages uttered by our Lord. “In the time of peace prepare for war,” is one way in which we apply the thought. The possession and development of great powers of resistance, capable of beneficent use in peace, unaggres-

The Peace of God

sive in intent, but a mighty engine of defence in case of assault, is a spiritual, moral and physical necessity. None but extreme non-resistance people can think otherwise. Peace, in one sense, consists in immunity from attack because of the possession of superior power.

The peril of this position is that great armaments are developed with a subtle purpose of aggression lying behind. Or, it may be, the strong, conscious of great strength, will lapse into the bully. This is bound to be unless there are forces powerful enough to hold armaments in leash. The disciplined use of strength is the acme of self-government. No nation in the world and few institutions or individuals have yet learned the art.

The Peace of God

Only the strong man fully armed—*καθωπλισμένος*,* a neat and telling word—can be a true neutral where others are embroiled. Neutrality does not stand for neitherness, for voiceless watching on the sidelines, for mere self-interest. Were it otherwise then the neutral nation could not allow its citizens to sell arms to belligerents on either side. Neutrality stands for fair play and the observance of principles binding on all and to be transgressed by none without meriting and receiving the protest of all. Only a strong man can make a strong protest.

The *post factum* judgments of history are just, though inexorable. Their verdict refuses to take into account that the men, the value of

* "Furnished with arms."

The Peace of God

whose conduct is being assessed, acted only with the partial knowledge of the present, whereas the historian judges with the fuller light of subsequent happenings. That which, after common sense, is the most requisite spiritual qualification for leadership is ability to foresee and to mould action accordingly. The historian therefore judges the leader as though the whole scroll was complete at the moment it was being written.* Keeping this exacting canon in view, the weakness of America's neutrality in the Great War has

* "The weight of opinion is against me when, I exhort you never to debase the moral currency or to lower the standard of rectitude, but to try others by the final maxim that governs your own lives, and to suffer no man and no cause to escape the undying penalty which history has the power to inflict on wrong. The plea in extenuation of guilt and mitigation of punishment is perpetual. At every step we are met by arguments which go to excuse,

The Peace of God

been that her protests have been made only when self-interest required them. The "scrap of paper" crime ought to have elicited from our Government prompt and unequivocal condemnation, not in terms of war but in terms of a neutral nation bound to protect principles to which all nations alike are pledged. Again a prompt and unequivocal note despatched the moment that certain international rights on the high seas were palpably and officially menaced,—might have made a note deprecate-

to palliate, to confound right and wrong, and reduce the just man to the level of the reprobate. The men who plot to baffle and resist us are, first of all, those who made history what it has become. They set up the principle that only a foolish Conservative judges the present time with the ideas of the Past; that only a foolish Liberal judges the Past with the ideas of the Present."

The Study of History by Lord Acton,
pp. 63, 64.

The Peace of God

ing actual transgression, which involved our self-interest, unnecessary and one crime less on the calendar of war. The notes when they came were what they ought to have been. They would have been immortal had they come as the protest of a neutral nation outraged by openly threatened lawlessness rather than as a cry of pain from a neutral nation that had been hurt. The heavy responsibility of the neutral nation, in addition to watching for and using opportunity to act as peace maker, is to guard international interests from transgression on the right hand and on the left, without favor and without fear. It is conceivable that a neutral nation might incur the disfavor of both belligerents by the courageous exercise of her duties as a

The Peace of God

neutral nation. Indeed she might conscientiously be compelled to do that which would call forth a declaration of war from each. There is no call for her to assail by force: there is a clear call for her to do her duty undeterred by fear of being assailed. She is free of fear of being assailed if she is as the strong man "fully armed." Israel was not forbidden the use of arms or the employment of force. Isaiah's contention was for her abstention from alliances with other nations like Egypt and Assyria. Israel's ally was God. She was to live by faith, with Him as her rock and castle, her shield and buckler. Obedience to His laws and acceptance of His teaching would give her an armor which could be forged by no earthly ally.

The Peace of God

S. Luke xii, 51

“Think ye that I am come to give peace in the earth” (Cf. S. Matt. x, 34).

This upholds the principles just enunciated. There are occasions when our character as sons of peace develops the hostility of others. Our principles, being universal, involve us in universal relationships. Those who are sons of war and not of peace become *ipso facto* our assailants. We, however, in loyalty to our character as sons of peace may never lose our peaceable intention. The hostility that thus arises is that of the Church militant.

It is just here that I am uncomfortable and unhappy about our nation. We have been clever and restrained enough to keep our-

The Peace of God

selves from being embroiled. We have not taken a strong enough stand, a stand that might earn us a hatred to be proud of. The question is how and to what end have we kept ourselves unentangled. By something like self-isolation that has not anything splendid about it? We are too detached. Is it going to equip us to play a noble part when the moment for reconciliation and peacemaking comes? Laodicea was neutral—neither the one thing nor the other. “*Quia neque frigidus es, neque calidus: utinam frigidus esses, aut calidus; sed quia tepidus es, et nec frigidus, nec calidus, incipiam te evomere ex ore meo*” (Rev. iii, 15, 16). A person ignorant of the Latin can catch something of the scorn contained in its trenchant rhythm. So far as

The Peace of God

self-interest was concerned there was no neutrality. Laodicea was on the side of her own wealth and prosperity. "Dives sum et locupletatus, et nullius egeo" (Rev. iii, 17). But if it came to moral influence and real power, listen! "Tu es miser et miserabilis, et pauper et caecus, et nudus" (Rev. iii, 17). The quotation repudiating neutrality is given in Latin because neutrality is Latin—and obsolete. Perhaps we need a new word to express the positive side of the negative virtue called, in world politics, neutrality.

A strong position evokes of necessity a strong hostility on the part of evil. Evil is clever and mighty and persevering—only less so than the Lord God of hosts. It is silly to pretend otherwise (Cf.

The Peace of God

S. Matt. xvi, 23). Our Lord's rebuke to the kindly intentioned Peter is terrific. It is like a flash of lightning blighting forever hedonism and the theory that privilege means exemption from responsibility and from a high degree of suffering.

Progress always means antagonisms. Frequently it is the young who are set against the old. Sometimes the radicals against the conservatives. It may be that one has to choose between peace with God and peace with men. The two do not always run hand in hand.

The creation of antagonisms, then, is part of Christian necessity, foreseen and provided for by Christ. We cannot be friends or at peace with everyone even among professing Christians. There is no

The Peace of God

room for war among those who are Christian indeed. The Christ warrior goes forth to establish clear-cut decisions and to challenge the enemy. The effort to be at peace with everyone merely for the sake of peace ends in our trimming principles and gaining popularity at the expense of self-respect and character. Those words of the Great Seer are fascinating in their awfulness,—“And another horse came forth, a red horse: and to him who sat thereon it was given to take peace from the earth, and that they should slay one another: and there was given unto him a great sword” (Rev. vi, 4).

O God, help me not to be afraid of the red horse. Make me ready, when need be, to select him as my steed and to draw the sword

The Peace of God

against all thine enemies. Sometimes war, outward and inward, is a condition of the preservation for ourselves and others of the peace of God that passeth all understanding.

S. Luke xiv, 32

“Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and asketh conditions of peace.”

These words are used in conjunction with one of the most fiery passages in the Gospel (S. Luke xiv. 25 ff.). It has to do with antagonisms and reconciliations. The alternative to fighting is the diplomatic art. It is not to aim at peace at all costs but, having weighed all the conditions specified, to decide whether or not they are honorable

The Peace of God

and, so, possible. Otherwise it is war.

S. Luke xix, 38

“Blessed is the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven and glory in the highest.”
Ἐιρήνη ἐν οὐρανῷ. The home of peace was not on earth. Men looked away from this troubled sphere. They looked up for it. Glory was only in the highest—*ἐν υψίστοις.* It was all very far from and foreign to earth. The only thing men could do was to contemplate it and yearn for it. How different the angel's song—*ἐπι γῆς εἰρήνη.* It was for this that Christ came—to put peace and glory near man; to translate trouble into terms of peace and service into terms of glory. We look beyond, around,

The Peace of God

above peace. Whereas it is here, right here, ἐπὶ γῆς—ἀνθρώποις.

5. Luke xix, 42

“If thou hadst known in this day, even thou, the things which belong unto peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.”

Is there any relation in the Evangelist's mind between this verse and v. 38? The people were hymning peace in heaven. The Saviour says they are neglecting an available peace on earth.

1. Peace is a product of something else.

2. It has apparently in this connection to do with external conditions. One recalls Israel, in the face of Isaiah's warnings, coquetting with Assyria, Babylon and Egypt. If the Jews had lived by

The Peace of God

faith and refused alliances with blaspheming and unholy force, what would have been their character and influence.

3. God's plans for peace may reach a stage, when in His loving kindness, they are no longer open to us. Then comes a blindness that obscures them. After that an accumulation of horrors descends upon us as their substitute.

4. Peace is the product of our active recognition of God's plans for us. "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." God grant that the nations may at this time see the things which belong to their peace!

S. Luke xxiv. 36

"Peace be unto you." See also S. John xx, 19, 21, 26.

The Peace of God

Now we are in the rare altitude of the Resurrection. Peace is made new. It has passed through trouble as the grist through the mill. It emerges all prepared for mankind. Hereafter it is a triumphant peace before it even faces trouble, for our Lord representatively has emancipated it from molestation or harm (S. John xvi, '33).

This is no bare salutation but the bringing of heaven's peace to earth. It is the fulfillment of the promise: "Peace I leave with you: my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you" (S. John xvi, 27). This is a type of peace hitherto unknown. It is only in the gift of Christ. No one else could give it. "*My peace*"—a peace undisturbed and un-

The Peace of God

marred by external confusion and enmity. Its antithesis is trouble and fear. "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be fearful" (Cf. Ps. xlvi. Also Ps. lvi, 3). "Though I am sometime afraid: yet put I my trust in thee"—the resultant is God's peace. The peace of faith or internal, as distinguished from the peace of conditions, or external, peace.

Consider S. John xx, 19, 21, 26:

1. With reference to physical fear;
2. With reference to the fear of sin;
3. With reference to doubt.

Col. iii, 15

"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to the which also ye

The Peace of God

were called in one body; and be ye thankful.”

It is our high duty to recognize the reign of peace and make our hearts always subject to its laws. This great gift is the first one to seek for and gain. Nothing else can be held and fully used unless we have the *pax Christiana*. There is no lack of it (Ps. lxxii, 7: Zech. ix, 10).

Eph. ii, 14 ff

“He is our peace, who made both one, and brake down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; that he might create in himself of the two one new man, so making peace; and might reconcile them

The Peace of God

both in one body unto God through the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: and he came and preached peace to you that were far off and peace to them that were nigh: for through him we both have our access in one Spirit unto the Father” (Cf. Col. i, 19, 20).

It was long before seen that in the Messiah was peace—“This man shall be our peace” (Micah v. 5). It is not merely that plottings and plannings, strivings and yearnings, after peace, are incapable of winning even a truce, much less an enduring peace, but that the peace which *He is* stands apart from and above all other conditions called by that name. It includes the tranquility of lesser grades and forms of peace but its

The Peace of God

finality and completeness give it a character which only they who taste of it can know.

Gal. v, 22

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, etc.”

This constant living with Christ, our life in the Vine (S. John xv, 1 ff.) is fruitful of active virtues. Peace comes as part of the sequence. Peace as here referred to is whole peace, Godward and manward. You cannot have the former without promoting the latter (Cf. 1 John iv, 20, 21). A man who thinks he is at peace with God and is always in a state of contention with men has a long road to travel before he can reach the Kingdom of God (Cf. Rom. xiv, 17).

The Peace of God

Heb. xii, 14

“Follow after peace with all men.” See also 1 Cor. vii, 15; Rom. xii, 18, xiv, 19; 1 Cor. xiv, 33; 2 Tim. ii, 22; S. Mk. ix, 50; 2 Cor. xiii, 11; 1 Thess. v, 13.

This group of injunctions makes peace a goal to be won, a possession to be acquired by an output of spiritual effort. It does not militate against the idea of its being fruit. It is the fruit of the marriage of God's favor and our effort.

Rom. i, 7

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” See also: 1 Cor. i, 3; 2 Cor. i, 2; Gal. i, 3; Eph. i, 2; Phil. i, 2; Col. i, 2; 1 Thess. i, 2; 1 Tim. i, 2; 2 Tim. i, 2; Tit. i, 4;

The Peace of God

Philem. 3; 2 John 3; Jude 2; 1 Pet. i, 2; 2 Pet. i, 2.

This as it stands is the distinctly Christian salutation. It is the perpetual memorial of the Incarnation and the Resurrection. The Angel's song and the Saviour's greeting were always echoing through the souls of the early Christians. As compared with all other greetings it is decidedly the greatest. Compare it with our "How do you do?" A friend of mine always meets or leaves me with "The Lord love you!"

The greeting of peace is peculiarly oriental in origin and use. Cf. "Peace be multiplied unto you" (Dan. iv, 1; Dan. vi, 25). It is the declaration of the absence of hostile feelings or intent. More than that. It is a high, the highest,

The Peace of God

expression of friendliness. In the distant past we can picture men who were meeting for the first time, or without knowledge of one another's character, crying out as they approached, "Peace be unto you."

The Christian salutation finds its explanation in this traditional greeting. But it has in it the whole of Christ's exposition of peace. Peace is not only a lack of fear, the result of the removal of apprehension and uncertainty. It is that. Fear is due to our sense of inability to cope with untried and hostile forces. Peace is more than reassurance. It is a triumphant coordination that puts us in command so that hostile forces are compelled to serve us and our interests. Captivity is led captive.

The Peace of God

We are allied, organically united, with all that is victorious and with every ultimate principle. Faith in God's superiority to anything inimical that may happen and the certainty that all God is and has is at our disposal, dispels fear, for at once we achieve the victory that overcometh the world (society organized apart from God).

A salutation is a key note to the fellowship which it introduces—or, better, it gives out a theme. The peace salutation is the badge of the peace character. Our errand is that of our Master—to bring peace on earth, to introduce the peace of heaven into our own sphere of life and activity. The beginning is within ourselves (Rom. v. 1). This must be, else we cannot move. We can give only what we have re-

The Peace of God

ceived and actually possess. One is struck with the abundance of peace in the much tried and persecuted men who wrote the New Testament books. Peace bubbles from their lives and lips as water from a perennial spring. Is there any literature in the world so full of trouble and so full of peace as the Gospels?

Matt. v, 9

“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called Sons of God” (Cf. Prov. xii, 20; James iii, 18).

If war is caused by misunderstanding—and it usually is—peace is brought about and maintained by understanding. A peacemaker must be a man of deep understanding of both sides. Our

The Peace of God

Lord is the peacemaker between God and man because He knows each from within and reveals their deep potential unity. (See S. John xvii, 21.) Christ reveals God to man and interprets man to God.

A peacemaker is indeed then a son of God in that he does Christ's own reconciling work. But they are rare people, are peacemakers. Their insight must be profound, their tact limitless, their wisdom not of this world.

Everyone who follows Christ is by profession a peacemaker. The sphere in which each person works expands from a common centre. There is the home, society, the Church, the nation. The same qualifications are necessary for the peacemaker in the home and in the world of international relations.

The Peace of God

1. The peace aimed at is a fruit, not an end in itself. It is the result of a right relationship. Peace considered as an end in itself is smoothness of a Uriah Heep texture. It is oily peace. Oil on the troubled waters does not quell the storm. It deals with effects not causes.

2. Again peace is more active than war. It is truer to say that a cessation of war will be the result of peace, than that peace will be the result of a cessation of war.

3. The qualities necessary for peacemaking are:

(a) Catholicity. We must know man as well as men. We must believe that humanity is essentially one. There are those who say that the gulf, for instance, between East

The Peace of God

and West is impassable, and that no understanding friendship between the two major divisions of the world is possible. A Western diplomat and peacemaker who knows the East through long effective service says:

“If there is any truth in the saying that man was created in the likeness of God, then it is certain that there is only one likeness, to which every race conforms . . . Our superiority consists neither in kind nor degree, but in the proportion which the good bears to the bad. The defects for which we are inclined to despise the Egyptians are, as I have said, identical with those which we possess ourselves.”*

“It is literally true that all men

* “To See with Others’ Eyes.” By A. M. I. 1907.

The Peace of God

are brothers, in the sense that all races in their main features closely resemble each other.”

(b) Understanding that can come only through self-identification, by the power of sympathy, first with these, then with those.

This is a characteristic hated by the partisan. He sees only through the colored windows of his own little house. The catholic man frequents mountain tops and sees broad expanses lighted only by God's sunshine. He is not afraid of being misunderstood. But he is disturbed to find that he misunderstands.

The word “entente” is a greater word, and expresses a greater thought, than “alliance.” It marks an advance in diplomatic relations. Peace between nations

The Peace of God

should be the result of understanding, each by each, not of an agreement of more or less commercial significance.

An understanding man is not blind to differences and peculiarities. He sees them but does not overestimate their seriousness.

In international relations, the men who have been magnificent in their binding power like Albert Gallatin,* and Sir Thomas Barclay,† have been men of deep understanding, and prodigious patience.

The world is hungering to-day for peacemakers of great stature. Never were they so needed. Feeble, sentimental pacificism only

* "A Great Peacemaker, the Diary of James Gallatin 1813-1827."

† "Thirty Years' Anglo-French Reminiscences, 1876, 1906."

The Peace of God

turns the stomach. It is often the result of a lack of virility and a symptom, if not of cowardice, at any rate of a decay of the heroic. On May 5, 1813, Albert Gallatin wrote:

“I have made up my mind that I could in no other manner be more usefully employed for the present than on the negotiation of a peace.”* His peacemaking was true at the core. There ensued one hundred years of peace between England and America. How much poorer and less intelligent than it is would the friendship between England and France be if Sir Thomas Barclay’s work were eliminated! The pattern Peacemaker is Christ. Only in and through Him the peace of nations

* “A Great Peacemaker,” p. 2.

The Peace of God

and the peace of the Church is thinkable, let alone possible. A truly Christian peace among Christian nations—what a marvelous and beautiful thing it would be! And it is to be. It is in God's purpose and is awaiting man's will. If as long ago as the days of Isaiah men could expect and pray for it, I would indeed be faithless were I to falter in a living hope or were to withhold even the little I may have to contribute to the hastening of God's day.

Phil. iv, 7

“And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.”

Those who have the peace of God will be *ipso facto* peace-

The Peace of God

makers. Peacemakers (*i. e.*, sons of God) will *ipso facto* have the peace of God.

No word of exposition is necessary here. This sublime blessing stretches its white, untiring wings over all who love and work and hope and pray. The peace of God is the sweetest mystic possession and the truest solace that the inner life can know. But it is more, far more, than a consolation. It is a conserver of strength, which makes and keeps the frail strong and the timid brave. Like God Himself it is beyond analysis and explanation—it passes all understanding, as it keeps its untiring guard over our hearts and thoughts in Christ Jesus.

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